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10 July 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Strategic Research

SUBJECT : DCI Letter to Mr. Rielly on  
Wohlstetter Article

1. Attached is a draft letter for the DCI responding to Mr. Rielly's inquiry about Albert Wohlstetter's article in Foreign Policy on intelligence and the arms race. Also attached are two graphs displaying actual Soviet ICBM deployments and several projections made during the mid- and late 1960s in the NIPP and other official issuances.

2. The record bears out Wohlstetter's point as far as it goes: During the last decade the US did substantially underestimate future Soviet ICBM deployments and did so pretty consistently. But the full record is more complicated. While underestimating total deployments, I think the record will show that we tended to be high on the pace at which the Soviets would bring in improved offensive technology, such as better missile mods, and deploy ABM defenses. The ABM projections particularly appeared to play an important role in spurring US MIRV programs as well as encouraging the US to seek negotiated limitations on ABM. In a sense, then, these projections may be seen to have both encouraged arms competition and arms control. The record is, in short, even more complicated than Wohlstetter makes out.

3. This draft is offered now because the Rielly letter deserves a prompt reply. It might be advisable, however, to prepare a more extensive background critique of Wohlstetter's argument be-

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cause it may reappear in coming weeks and months, for example, in DCI testimony before Congress. We are too booked to undertake such a review just now. But Howie Stoertz suggested in a conversation yesterday that [redacted] of the ICS/Program Review Group could do a very useful job. And we could help out as the need arose. Such a review could also help support major a history of the strategic arms race that I've heard has been proposed by OSD.

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[redacted]  
/Chief  
SEC/OSR

Attachments:  
As Stated

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Mr. John E. Rielly  
The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations  
116 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Dear John:

I very much appreciated the opportunity to address the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and look forward to such occasions with your organization and others like it in the future.

I have read Professor Wohlstetter's article in Foreign Policy and found it stimulating and provocative. He is certainly right in saying that the projection of foreign military forces years into the future is "a hard line of work." He is essentially correct in his finding that official intelligence, as reflected in Defense Posture Statements, tended during the 1960s to underestimate the future deployment of Soviet ICBM forces. This phenomenon illustrates that strategic arms competition, and the intelligence problems related to it, are much more complex than frequently assumed in public discussions. But by focusing almost exclusively on estimates of Soviet offensive systems deployments, Professor Wohlstetter himself somewhat oversimplified the historical record of intelligence projections in the last decade. The broader context includes projections of weapons technology, i.e., qualitative factors as well as numbers of launchers deployed, and defensive systems, such as ABM, as well as offensive weapons.

In this broader context, the record of intelligence projections is mixed, but shows more balance between under and overestimation than Professor Wohlstetter's article suggests.

Sincerely,

W. E. Colby  
Director

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**ARMS CONTROL AND FOREIGN POLICY**  
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**SEMINAR**

Conference on  
**ARMS COMPETITION & STRATEGIC DOCTRINE**

*LEGENDS OF THE STRATEGIC ARMS RACE*  
*Part I: The Driving Engine*

by

Albert Wohlstetter

June 1974

Draft: Restricted to Members Only  
Not for Publication or Dissemination

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Col.

IC Staff

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REMARKS:

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## EXTENSION

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1 FEB 55

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REPLACES FORM 36-B  
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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